

Watershed Agricultural Council
Conservation Easement Stewardship Fund (CESF)
Frequently Asked Questions



1. What is a “conservation easement”?

A conservation easement is an interest that a land conservation organization (like WAC) acquires in a property to protect its conservation values. Once placed on a property by a landowner, conservation easements exist in perpetuity. A WAC conservation easement serves multiple purposes: to protect the water quality of the New York City watersheds, and to protect agricultural and forestry lands within the NYC Watershed.

A WAC conservation easement purchases or conditions multiple interests in property to fulfill its stated conservation purposes, while allowing the landowner to continue to own and use the land, sell it or pass it on to heirs.

2. What do you mean by “easement stewardship”?

Easement stewardship is about WAC working with the landowner and assisting them in the management of their conservation easements. Stewardship includes, but is not limited to, annual monitoring of easement properties, assisting landowners with reserved right activities such as timber harvests, bluestone extraction and stream work plans, as well as notification of conveyances.

3. Why does WAC need so much money for this endowment fund?

Building a \$10-million endowment will allow WAC to do its stewardship work in perpetuity with just the interest generated from the Fund. The WAC could then perform its stewardship obligations independent of other funding sources.

4. Where will the money come from?

The WAC has successfully raised nearly \$300,000 to date from individuals and organizations supportive of the easement program. Additional donations are expected from a variety of sources including:

- The WAC board, program managers and staff
- WAC easement landowners
- Friends and supporters of the Fund
- Grants from community foundations or agencies
- Planned giving
- Annual gift campaigns

5. What is DEP's role in the Fund?

The New York City Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) is participating in several ways:

- The DEP has already donated \$100,000 to the Fund, with an additional \$250,000 pledged.
- The DEP will also contribute \$8,000 to the Fund for every easement secured by WAC. The WAC's obligation is to raise \$4,000 for each easement purchased, thereby fulfilling the 2-to-1 matching grant posed by the DEP.
- The WAC expects to close on 50 easements by the year 2012. The WAC's expected contribution to the Fund will be approximately \$200,000 (50 easements at \$4,000 each). By 2012, DEP's challenge grant will total an additional \$400,000 (50 easements at \$8,000 each).

6. What can I do to help?

Here are ten ways you can help today:

- Establish the WAC's Easement Stewardship Fund as one of your top three charitable gifts each year. Give generously and encourage others to give.
- Donate a service, item or craft at the annual WAC Forestry Dinner silent auction each November.
- Hold a fundraising event at your home, inviting a group of friends and family to gather and learn about the Fund, the work WAC does and how they can help.
- Introduce interested donors to members of WAC's Fund Development Team, so they can provide potential supporters with the information they need to become involved with WAC's cause.
- Attach the WAC's "Donate Now" button to your email signature and encourage others to give easily through the internet.
- Consider placing the Fund in your will as part of your Planned Giving strategy.
- Set up a regular giving schedule (\$10/month=\$120/year); monthly, hassle-free credit card transactions can be created through WAC's website, www.nycwatershed.org.
- Return the donation envelope within the 2008 WAC Annual Report, or pass it along to a friend.
- Conduct your online shopping through iGive.com and select the WAC Conservation Easement Stewardship Fund as the recipient of retailer donations resulting from your online purchases.
- Be a champion of the Fund. Talk about the good work that WAC does. Explain the easement program to others; help them understand the importance of protecting both water quality and working landscapes in the NYC watershed.

If you have additional questions or need more information, contact:

Tom O'Brien, Executive Director
607) 865-7790, ext. 103
tobrien8@nycwatershed.org

Tara Collins, Communications Director
(607) 865-7017, ext. 226
taracollins@nycwatershed.org

